

A

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, April 15. 1707.

I Brought my Abridgment of the Reformation, down to King *Henry VIII.* renouncing the Supremacy of the Pope, and gave you a Hint, how this altogether involuntarily in the King, prov'd the first Step to the Reformation in *England.*

The next thing was the *Suppression of the Monasteries in England*, and as before the King's Objection against his Wife was laid at the Door of one Vice, so this is laid to his Charge as another; if one was charg'd on his *Lewdness*, the other was charg'd on his *Avarice*——And I am not at all concern'd to clear his Memory of either, since I yet see no Room to say much of his Respect to either Justice or Religion in any of these Proceedings, and he was in his Intervals a most bitter and bloody Persecutor of the Protestants, in both the Junctures of these Transactions.

The Story of suppressing the Monasteries is very long. The first Occasion against them is taken from their opposing the King's Divorce, and espousing the Pope's Supremacy; the visible Pretence is the scandalous Lives of, and secret Wickednesses practis'd among the Incumbents of both Sexes——Upon which is grounded a Commission to several Persons by Virtue of the King's newly assum'd Supremacy, to visit the Monasteries, enquire into their scandalous Practices, and make their Report.

It is too remote to my Business to trouble the Reader with a Digression, so long as of Course it must be to enter into the Manner and Method, the Degrees, the Difficulties, and the Reasons of that great Work; 'tis enough to referr the Reader to the several Histories of those Days, my Notes shall still be suitable to the Foundation of my present Work

Work, *Viz.* How strangely Providence has all along brought to pass the great Events of the Reformation of these Kingdoms, by and out of the concurrent Circumstances of the Passions and Follies of Men, nay, and even their basest Vices also.

For even King *Henry* was yet not in the least inclin'd to favour the Protestant Religion or Reformation; but be it his Lust, his Avarice, his Ambition, or whatever else the Objectors please, still the Foundation of the Reformation was laid here, and just as in the Case of our National Union, every contradicting Circumstance still help'd to bring it to pass.

Nor is it any Reproach at all to the Protestant Religion; that, *as the Papists say*, its first Step is deduc'd from King *Henry's* Cod-piece, meaning that the Lust of that Pretence set the Wheels at Work, and prompted him to cavil at the Lawfulness of his Marriage, and pretend Conscience, whereas he only resolv'd to have new Bed-fellows, and would have his Whoredoms varnish'd over with the Lustre of Law.

This only leads me to the constant Use, I shall make of all these things, and to match past Circumstances; for even just thus in the Union, the Pretenders against cry out of Conscience and National Perjury, and a hundred Briberies and Self-Designs—— But my Business is to eye the Designs Heaven has had in all these things, to finish his own mighty Decrees, and bring forward the Determinations of inscrutable Providence.

Was the Lusts and Avarice of King *Henry* the first moving Causes of the Reformation, or have the Self-Interests and private Designs of Men and Parties set forward this great Affair, the Union; this is certain, the mighty determin'd Issue has been brought to pass by them, and all the rest is but a general Subserviency of Causes, as GOD in his Wisdom always directs; that the very worst and wickedest of Men's Designs shall concur to bring to pass the best and greatest of his glorious Works.

And if this were a sufficient Objection, either against one or t'other, then the Blindness and Fury of the *Jews* in the Crucifixion of our Saviour, and all the concurring Cir-

cumstances of that wonderful Transaction would be Difficulty to our believing the whole to be the Work of Heaven; whereas the Apostle is express to this very Point, in the 2. *Acts* 23. speaking to the *Jews* of their Part in the Crucifixion of our Lord, says, *Him being deliver'd by the determinate Counsel and Fore-knowledge of GOD, ye have taken, and by wicked Hands have crucify'd and slain.*

The Wickedness therefore of all the Instruments concern'd in any of these great Works, lessens nothing of the Value of the Work, whether we are speaking of the Reformation or the Union; and yet I shall in the Process of these Sheets come to show, that perhaps never better Instruments have been employ'd in any Work of this Nature in the World, or more adapted to the perfecting of them; when I come to compare a little the Reigns of the Princes in each Conjunction, such as *Henry VIII.* *Edward VI.* *Q. Mary* and *Q. Elizabeth*, with the Reign of King *Charles II.* King *James*, King *William*, and Queen *ANNE*, in which Comparison, if I mistake not, we shall find something very diverting, and very much instructing too.

But to go back to the Historical Part of my Work, the Supremacy of the Pope being reduc'd, the Abbeyes and Monasteries were stript of their Strength, and lay all at the King's Mercy, who being resolv'd to suppress them, and seize upon their Revenues, had them dealt with sundry Ways.

Some he brought by Treaty to surrender into his Hands, their Guilt taking also all Courage from them to contend with the King: The Visitors gave in a terrible Report of the Wickedness, they had discover'd among them, of which the Reverend Bishop of *Salisbury*, in his first Volume of the History of the Reformation, gives this short Account.

In their Letters to Cromwell it appears, that in most Houses they found monstrous Disorders, they found great Factions in the Houses, and barbarous Cruelties exercis'd by one Faction against another, as either of them prevail'd; in some they found the Tools and Instruments for Ceyning and Multiplying—— But for the Lewdness of Confessors, of Nunneries, the Dissoluteness of Abbots, Monks and Fryers,

Fryers, not only with Whores, but marry'd Women, and for their unnatural Lusts and brutal Practices.—These are not, says the Author, fit to be spoken of.—Adding, what he had seen an Extract of a Part of this Vignation, viz. On the 144 Houses, which contain Abominations in it, equal to what was in Sodom.

Let the King's Designs have been what they will, Heaven had not determin'd only the Catastrophy of Monastical Abomination, but their own horrid Wickednesses were arriv'd to such a Height, that the Divine Justice was eminently conspicuous in their Downfall, and the Clamours at the King's private Designs, in appropriating their Revenues, were heard with the less Regret by the People.

But as I am pursuing this History no farther, than as it shall bring these things down to the present State of Religion in this Nation, and the Differences among us, whose Rise, Beginning, and Progress will best be made clear, by thus running thro' the various Steps of the Reformation; so my Observations on these things will perhaps be different, from what is expected by the Reader; and if he is sometimes a little surpriz'd with novel Remarks, which perhaps he may think remote, I cannot help it, I'll answer for the Justness of the Observation, and explain my self as I go on; and the next Paper perhaps may be the first Step I shall take of this Kind.

MISCELLANEA.

I Left off at the Defect of the late Act for two Thirds, &c. or the Major Including the Minor; before I come to the Abuses of this Act, I desire to notice the Reasons for making it, which if they are good, as without doubt they are, then when the Abuses were found out, the Act ought to have been amended, not destroy'd: For without doubt it was the best Act for Trade, the best qualified to relieve the Creditor, and save the Estate of the Debtor, and built upon the most rational Foundation of any Act, that ever yet was offer'd in this Nation; the Case is thus,

Upon the first Failure of a Tradesman, it is without doubt the Season, before he is run to Extremities, and taught the Shifts and Tricks of a distress'd State, to hear what Offers he can make, and in my general Observation I have always found, the first Offer has been the best he could ever make, nor is it unreasonable that it should be so; for certainly, keeping the Man in Distress and Dilemma's does not encrease, but lessen his Capacity that Way. In this Case it has been very frequent in England, that when a Man has fail'd, and offer'd to his Creditors, what they have generally believ'd it their

Interest to close with, and been convinc'd has been the most the Man has been able to offer; one refractory Creditor obstinately standing out, and deaf to all Intreaties, either of the distress'd Family, or the rest of the Creditors, shall ruin all this fair Proposal, entirely destroy the miserable Debtor and his Family, and by forcing him to hide, sculk about, and live in Misery on the Estate, waste all he would have given them, and be at last able to offer nothing at all.

To remedy this, it was propos'd to make a Law; that if two thirds, both in Number and Value of the Creditors of any Person, should sign and seal an Instrument of Composition, all the rest should be bound by it, a most just and prudent thing, even for the Interest of the Creditors, who, oftentimes by the Obstinacy of a few, were generally defeated in the Share, they might have saved from their Debtors.

But no sooner was this pass'd into a Law, but the Fate of all such Laws beset it; for all the Rabble of *Mint, Fryers, Kings-Bench, Fleet*, and of all the Receptacles of Bankrupts in the Nation, fall to work with it, and getting Lists of innumerable Creditors found in *Nubious*, and dividing Debts into various